

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the present amendment is respectfully requested. By this amendment, claims 1-10 are amended.

Claims 2-10 are amended to replace "characterized in that" with "wherein." These amendments to claims 2-10 are intended for better form and not to distinguish over the references cited in the Official Action. Claim 3 is also amended as suggested by the examiner to overcome the rejection of claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. 112. Claim 7 is amended to depend from claim 1 and thus, overcomes the rejection of claims 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. 112.

Regarding the rejection of claim 9 under 35 U.S.C. 112, the word "tears" in the phrase "when said module covering (9) tears open" is used as a verb. Thus, "said module covering (9)" in the above-mentioned phrase is the element, which is introduced in claim 1. Sufficient antecedent basis is therefore provided this feature and thus, the rejection of claim 9 under 35 U.S.C. 112 should be withdrawn.

Claims 1-6, 9, and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hauer. Claims 1-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hohne et al. Claim 1 is amended to recite that the outer surface (26) projecting laterally from the contact surface (22) runs in a continuous, stepless convex shape from the contact surface (22) up to the module covering (9). As set forth below, it is respectfully submitted that neither Hauer nor Hohne discloses or suggests this structure.

Claim 1 recites a central spacer piece (23) and a module covering (9) as separate elements. Hauer does not disclose a central spacer piece. In Hauer, the portion identified by the examiner at "A" as being the spacer piece is clearly part of an inner carrier layer (60), as evidenced by their identical crosshatching patterns. The inner carrier layer (60) is one component of a two-component covering (9) of the airbag module. The covering (9) is produced by injection molding by which both components are attached to each other (see Col. 4, lines 23-28). Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that Hauer does not disclose or suggest a spacer piece as recited in claim 1, but rather a portion of the cover (9) that is contiguous with the other portions of the cover identified by identical crosshatching.

Also, in Hauer, the portion identified by the examiner at "A" as being the spacer piece has a horizontal step provided at the outer surface and clearly does not run in a continuous, stepless convex shape from the contact surface up to the module covering. It is noted that the horizontal step in Hauer may actually decelerate or otherwise inhibit gas bag unfolding, which is contrary to the teachings of the present invention. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that Hauer also does not disclose or suggest an outer surface that runs in a continuous, stepless convex shape from the contact surface up to the module covering.

Hohne does not disclose or suggest a spacer piece with an outer surface that runs in a continuous, stepless convex shape from the contact surface up to the module covering. In Hohne, the part identified by the examiner as a spacer piece (25) clearly has a concave portion that extends between the contact surface and the module covering. Hohne thus exhibits the truncated cone configuration described in

the background of the present invention and would therefore exhibit the drawbacks associated with this configuration that the present invention overcomes, namely the high forces applied to the spacer piece.

Therefore, in view of the above-mentioned reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is allowable over Hauer and Hohne. Claims 2-10 depend from claim 1 and are therefore allowable as depending from an allowable claim and for the specific features recited therein.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the amendment be entered and the application allowed. Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,



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